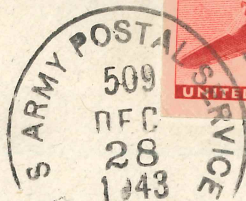
Lt. Frank W. Loops, 0-667527
432 Sqdn., 17th Bomb. Gp.
A.P.O. 520, % Postmaster N.Y.C.









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New York City

432 Sqdn., 17th Bomb. Gp.
A.P.O. 520, % Postmaster N.Y.C.
December 24, 1943

Merry Christmas Folks,-

Here it is - Christmas Eve - and 10:15 P.M. - so I wont get much written tonight as lights are supposed to be shut off at 10:30! - Maybe tonight will be an exception - if so - a little more letter - provided - (and that's a big provision! -) some more fellows don't come in to wish us "Bonna Natalie"! -

What a night this has been. - Our club isn't set up for operations yet - but the beverages are going the rounds of the various tents, and consequently, the various tents are having their various celebrations - ! -

The celebrations aren't quite as extensive as they could be. - There's a mission scheduled for tomorrow so most of us on it are being a bit shy. - We have a job to do, in spite of its being Christmas (regardless of how we feel) and we all have a responsibility to face whether it is piloting the planes, or whether it is to man the guns protecting us from potential enemy fighters. - Those of

us in our tent are all in good conditions however, for Joe (Buchert) is leading the group, Jim (Carey) is going as Group navigator, - and I am going as copilot to one of our flight leaders - therefore - we are "on" and must desist, as it were _!

Christmas eve in Sardinia - Quite a place and quite a time of the year. - Today I wasn't on the schedule so had a bit of time for thought. For a time, I'll admit, I was pretty low - but then - being away from home so long - and so far away, - it has sorta taken the edge off of it. The main consoling thought is that - I was home last year - and we all had one swell time. - That's more than we thought we'd get - so really it's not hard this year after all. - Lots and lots haven't such as that to fall back on, even! - Maybe next year things will be more to our own individual advantage - at least we can all pray that such will be true. - Anyhow - "Bonna Natale" for tonight and I will finish this tomorrow! Our "put put" is still running (10:45 - or 4:45 P.M. your time) but had better call a halt and go to bed. - Might be an early morning briefing and I'll need my rest. - So, good night and I'll see you mañana - or, to keep it Italian - "Mantina"! -

-Christmas night-

Here it is - almost bed time again so I'll just add a few lines and try to really finish this off tomorrow. - Tomorrow being Sunday and I'm not on the schedule maybe once more I can get back into the swing of my regular correspondence and not keep you folks waiting quite so long.

Let's see now - first thing - I got up this morning - and found my sock empty! - I hung it up last night just to see if it might get filled but it didn't, damit! - I stayed awake some of last night waiting to see how ol' Santa would go about getting down our 4 inch chimney but fell asleep before he came around. Apparently he gave it up as a bad job! -

Along about 10 oclock we went to briefing and 1:30 saw us over some marshalling yards. Off to one side I could look and see the leaning tower of Pisa! - Strange as it may seem - I thought about what you folks might be doing at that same instant. - Let's see - 6 hrs difference would have made it 7:30 A.M. in D.C. and some of you, if you were early risers, maybe were just getting up. Couldn't help but think that last year I was probably wondering where I would be and what I would be doing today,

a year hence, - and there I was - dropping bombs! - What a time! - I would gladly have changed places with myself - going back a year!

For dinner - I ate a "K" ration on my way home from the target - consisting of some cheese + crackers! For some reason we never get hungry until on the way home. - But I had some turkey, too! - The main meal was saved back here for supper, so the whole squadron could get in on the goodies. Our supper was nice - with Turkey, dressing, Sweet Potatoes - and more. - They had a printed menu - I'm enclosing - so you will see for yourself. For extras we received a package of cigarettes, a bar of Hershey's and a cigar! - It was all very nice and we all enjoyed ourselves as much as we could. -

After supper, we went to a "critique" - hashing out the "pros" + "cons" of the mission so we can benifit from our mistakes. - That takes us up till about 8 P.M. -

After returning to the tent I opened and served some fruit cake of Ma's! - I have ~~b~~ been saving it - just for today - and needless to say - it went to everyone's toes. It was as good as any you've ever made, Ma, -! Jim Cary, Joe Buchert, and Ed Bigelow helped me eat it - and ~~I~~ while they've never had any of Ma's to compare it with,

they swear up and down that there is none to compare with it! - I still have half left and maybe I will be an old meanie and sneak the rest for myself! - No. - I can't do that for I have already promised two more pieces of it away! Shucks!

That, plus a little time for a "bull session" brings me thru the day and up to now. - Now, I must stop cause in 5 minutes the "put. put" will be shut off and I'll have no lights! - So for now, I'll just say - goodnight - and it was a Merry Christmas in its way. - !

Sunday morning. -

Boy, this thing is starting to have the aspects of a project with all of these days adding on to it! - Well, I've got about ½ hour before church so I'll fill in the time here. After dinner I plan to walk awhile back in the woods so I'll finish this up before that.

Speaking of walking reminds me - the other day on a day off, two of us walked into town about 4 miles away. - (The fellow with me, by the way says he thinks his family knows the Van Evera family. - He doesn't remember whether or not he knows Van. - His home is in Des Moines, Iowa and I believe his

father is a judge. - Name is Don Allen) The walk was quite nice, and it wasn't until after we got back that we felt tired - cause all along was so much of interest. Allen has spent a little time in the Argentine, so knows Spanish, too. Between the two of us we have a riot of a time trying to talk Italian with every one who trys to talk to us! -

Along the way - there are always people walking along the road - every little kid we'd pass would say "Americana give me Bon Bon". Even if you are in a jeep they ask for candy. - The words American + candy have become synonymous you will soon gather as you go along. - And, boy - just give some to one kid, the only one in sight - and wham - there's a million around you! - Most of us have quite a bit of hard candy of sorts on hand, so we always give it out as we go along. - (Suckers.)

Along the way we passed a river - and you should see the women and children washing clothes. - Honestly, the water is ice cold and they just wade around in it like it was mid - July. They use the big boulders along the edges for a wash board and really get the clothes white. (No tattle tale grey over here!) The rocks, between the action of the water and the washing are just as smooth as can

be imagined. - The water around here is awfully soft so guess that's one thing that helps them clean the clothes so good.

The town - well, I can't describe that, but as all Italian or Sicilian towns I've seen - the streets are very narrow - about 15 ft wide - no sidewalks and the houses built clear out to the street. - Most of them are two story affairs with a walled in court yard or an inner court yard as the Spanish type is. In these are a variety of flowers, plants and anything else that just happens to be placed there. There's a municipal building and a park in the middle of the town. - In the park - a water fount and spigot where - apparently most of the people draw their water - whether for washing or drinking, I don't know. While we were there women and children would come and fill these huge water jugs - and carry them away on their __heads__! We saw some of that sort of carrying in Africa, of course, but guess I wasn't so impressed with it. Some of these jugs would have been more than a job for me to carry in my arms - they were that heavy. - The system, I don't know, except it's been going on for generations and each person starts it almost as soon as

he, or rather she, is big enough to walk! - They have a small thing of material - maybe an inch thick and sewed into a circle which acts as a cushion for whatever they carry. - When they get ready to go, they place the cushion on their head, sling the jar up - and off they go. - You would think they would have to balance it - but they just sling it up like they were putting it on a shelf - and they're off. - Sometimes it is centred on their heads and sometimes not. They carry tremendous loads that way - sometimes laundry which is only bulky, and sometimes a basket of oranges that must hold a couple of bushels.

The oranges reminds me. - We usually have a whole basket of them in our tent. They bring them around and trade them off for cigarettes also Almond nuts ("Mandalaye"). - The people have been without for so long its almost a joy to watch them in their delight over their gifts. There's an old man that's been doing some work near by and the other day I gave him a package of pipe tobacco I had. - It was some that I didn't like but had bought long time ago just in case I ever ran out. - When I received the ~~the~~ pound of Sir Walter from the

Pan American - I needed the room, so rather than throw this other away - I just gave it to him. - Well, the next day I was puttering around in the tent and he came up to the door and knocked. - He had a bag with at least 3 lbs of almonds in it - and he wanted me to have them! (That's another thing I found out in town. - the tobacco store hasn't been open in over 3 months for lack of tobacco to sell. So I can see now what my tobacco must have meant to him.) It's just little things like that that makes you want to do for these people.

Well, now - from the length of this I'd say it was time I broke off and put a stop to this. - but before I do - I want ~~to~~ to thank you all for the presents that you have sent me. -

Just last week I got the last package I believe with some films and developing paper, candies and V mail stationary. - The films are in time. I was on my last roll that I got with the camera. The paper I think I can use cause I'm trying to talk the squadron photographic officer into setting up a tent. ~~with~~ There are enough of us that we could organize a club. Of course - the development of the film is the important phase - cause if that could be done I can ~~censor them~~ and send them on to you.

Did I ever tell you Buckut is now our Squadron C.O?- He was our operations officer and as such he was acting C.O. for awhile. About a week ago the order came out making him officially the C.O. - Quite a jump. That's what ~~It~~ coming overseas with a Captaincy did for him. Jim - our navigator is likewise the Sqdn. Navigator.

This is so long I wont enclose the menu in it, but will wait until next time if I can keep track of it that long.

Lots of Love,

Frank.

P.S. - I received my log book in the mail today - Thanks a lot - it comes in cause I just finished up my old one about 2 weeks ago! It's just right. -

One thing more - Sister could you get something nice for a wedding present and send it to Joe Hollmeyer for me?- I got an announcement of it the other day. He married Jane Crook - the daughter of the people who were so nice to us in Winter Haven, Fla. - Don't think they are setting up house-keeping yet for their "at home" was her old address. - Just anything you can think of. - It doesn't have to be big. The address is:

Lt. & Mrs. Joseph G. Hollmeyer
115 Lake Silver Drive
Winter Haven, Fla. -

Thank you again.